



2005 Session Report

Representative **Doug Ericksen**

42nd Legislative District • Spring 2005

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Dear friends,

Thank you for taking time to read my newsletter. I feel this is one good way of staying in touch with you while I'm in Olympia representing our district.

We are approaching the end of our 105-day legislative session that began on January 10. I'd like to take the opportunity in this newsletter to reflect on some of the important issues the Legislature has addressed – and discuss what is still ahead.

Our state's budget is one of our remaining priorities this session. **It's important we pass a sustainable budget that does not raise taxes on families and employers and positions our state for the future.** I'll discuss my vision for our budget later in this newsletter.

On the local level, I'm working to:

- Allow our farmers to legally move their agricultural implements on our roadways;
- Protect farmland and families by allowing for gravel to be removed from the Nooksack in an environmentally sensitive way;
- Make sure the Guide Meridian project is built to fit the needs of our communities;
- Keep the Alcoa aluminum smelter operating;
- Give local elected officials more control over where sex offenders are housed.

On the state level, I'm working to:

- Balance the budget without raising taxes;
- Contain increasing health care costs and protect patient choices;
- Prioritize state spending on the core functions of government and our paramount duty of education;
- Restore citizens' trust in the voting system with comprehensive reform.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your state representative. Please contact me if I can ever be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Doug Ericksen • State Representative • 42nd District



Representative **Doug Ericksen**

Olympia office:

427A Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7980
ericksen.doug@leg.wa.gov

Leadership and

committee assignments:

Republican Floor Leader
Transportation
Capital Budget
Finance
Rules





Action Agenda for Washington

Balancing the budget without raising taxes

You're going to hear a lot in the news about our state budget "shortfall." The problem is not in the numbers – it's in the policies that dictate how your tax dollars are spent.

The shortfall is created by the assumption that we must continue to do things the way we always have. Here are some facts:

- The state will have more money to spend in the next budget; not less.
- There will be enough tax revenue collected in the next two years to increase spending by \$1.7 billion. This means the state can increase spending by 7.1 percent over the next two years without raising a single nickel in new taxes.
- Those who claim we're starting this budget \$1.6 billion in the hole are assuming that we need a 13 percent increase in spending over the next two years.

Unfortunately, some legislators are signaling they want to raise taxes. I'm against this approach.

We need **structural changes** in the way we deliver and pay for important state services, such as health care and education. It's time we pass a **sustainable budget that forces government to live within its means** and we can do this by:

- A strong **statutory spending limit**.
- A **constitutional rainy-day fund** that will protect taxpayers during economic downturns.

Providing families with more affordable health insurance

I'm concerned about limited choices and rising costs in health care for families. We need to change the paradigm and assumption by some people in Olympia who believe government programs are the answer to our health care crisis.

We can address the obstacles that limit consumer choices and increase the expenses of health insurance coverage by:

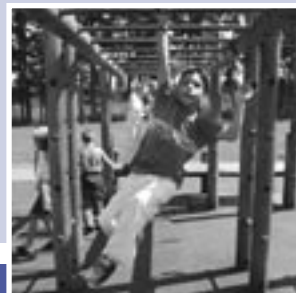
- Offering employees **health care plans that cover their major needs**, with an option for choosing more coverage based on their **individual needs**.
- Addressing skyrocketing medical malpractice premiums that are forcing doctors to close their doors or limit services. My House "seatmate" and I sponsored **House Bill 2279**, which would provide **comprehensive civil liability reform**, but it's yet to receive a hearing.
- Allowing for **health savings accounts**.
- **Easing state mandates** in health insurance plans.

Protecting our environment

- **"EverGreen Incentives Program"** – I'm working on a new concept that I'm calling the "EverGreen Incentives Program." This would create market-based tax incentives for organizations that protect our environment. For example, I'm sponsoring **House Bill 1121** which would provide tax incentives to paper manufacturers who utilize pressurized steam pulp washing technology. I'll keep you updated as this idea evolves.
- **High-performance buildings** – **House Bill 1272** would require public buildings to be built using high-performance standards that utilize energy efficiency, water conservation, pollution prevention, and resource-efficient materials. **I voted for this measure because it's good for the environment.**
- **Magnetic levitation projects** – **House Joint Memorial 4003** would ask Congress to make Washington a research center for this clean and safe light-rail technology. **House Bill 1429** would authorize personal rapid transit and magnetic levitation transit systems. **I sponsored both of these bills.**

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Action Agenda for Whatcom County



I was happy to have the opportunity to sponsor Bellingham's Levi Johnson as a page.

Helping small employers

Our smaller employers continue to face unfair challenges. We must make Washington more competitive and inviting to all businesses if we expect to see favorable employment rates. We can do this by:

- **Reining in regulatory taxes in workers' compensation** and other programs that make Washington an expensive place to do business.
- **Reforming the state's rulemaking process** to ensure accountability within government agencies.
- **Extending tax incentives for start-ups and small employers** to help stimulate new industries.
- **ATM fees – House Bill 1138** would allow automatic teller machine fees to be charged to international customers who are from countries where U.S. citizens are charged similar fees. This measure passed out of the House unanimously and I expect similar results in the Senate. **I sponsored this bill.**

Agriculture

- **Farm equipment transport – House Bill 1117** would increase the highway weight limit for the movement of certain farm implements. **I sponsored this legislation.** This measure appears to be moving forward.
- **Flood prevention – House Bill 1118** would allow local government to remove gravel from waterways to help prevent flooding without requiring permission from the state. **I sponsored this measure.** As I write this, the bill has stalled in the House. I remain hopeful it can move forward.

Transportation funding

- **The Guide Meridian Road project remains a top priority.** I'm working with the Department of Transportation, local elected officials, and concerned citizens to make sure this project is **completed on time** and in a fashion that **meets the needs of Whatcom County.**
- **Sumas project**
- **Blaine border crossing**
- **I-5 access issues**

Fighting “bill-title politics”

“Bill-title politics” refers to legislation that sounds good, but accomplishes very little.

This is what we're seeing this legislative session with bills ranging from prescription drugs to government accountability.

For example, the House passed four prescription drug bills that make false promises and would do nothing to address our health care crisis. They may also jeopardize a person's right to go to Canada and purchase prescription drugs.

While I don't encourage it, I support the ability of my constituents to go to Canada to buy prescription drugs. If they do, I recommend they work with legitimate companies and consult their doctors.

Another example is a performance audit measure passed by the House. **House Bill 1064** would spend millions of tax dollars and still not allow our state auditor to do independent performance audits.

As this legislative session winds down **I hope we can end this trend of “bill-title politics” and start considering solutions that get to the bottom of our state's problems.**

- Whatcom County Courthouse photo courtesy of Kulshan.com
- Peace Arch photo courtesy of Blaine.net





Working hard for **Whatcom County**

My new leadership position

I'm honored that my party elected me Floor Leader – one of the top positions on the House Republican leadership team. In this position, I'm directly involved in setting legislative priorities and leading House floor sessions.

I'm also a member of the House Transportation, Capital Budget, Finance and Rules committees.

I'm pleased to represent 42nd District constituents at the table when important decisions are made in the Legislature.



I'd like to hear from you!

If you have ideas, concerns or questions, please contact me here in Olympia. I can also assist in your dealings with state government.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Rep. Doug Ericksen
427A Legislative Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

(360) 786-7980
ericksen.doug@leg.wa.gov
Toll-Free Legislative Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

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P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

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